

Message Text

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47

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 /071 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3084

INFO USMISSION USUN NY IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 4214

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SF, US, UN

SUBJ: SOUTH AFRICAN DETAINEES: A STRANGE SWITCH OF SIGNALS

REF: PRETORIA 4208

1. SUBSEQUENT TO PREPARATION OF REFTEL THERE HAS BEEN A NEW DEVELOPMENT WHICH DEPT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER IN CONNECTION WITH MR. MITCHELL'S RESPONSE TO PRIME MINISTER VORSTER'S CHALLENGE.

2. LAST TUESDAY (OCT 28) I MENTIONED TO FOREIGN MINISTER MULLER THAT I WOULD APPRECIATE HIS ARRANGING AN APPOINTMENT FOR ME WITH THE PRIME MINISTER FOR A GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. I TOLD HIM I HAD MENTIONED TO THE PM WHEN I FIRST CALLED ON HIM THAT I HOPED WE WOULD BE ABLE TO DO THIS FROM TIME TO TIME. I NOTED THAT I HAD NOTHING SPECIFIC TO TAKE UP WITH HIM, BUT THOUGHT IT USEFUL IN VIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IN RECENT MONTHS. MULLER RESPONDED THAT HE ADVISED AGAINST MY SEEING HIM AT THIS TIME AND IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO WAIT UNTIL JANUARY. DETECTING THAT I WAS SOME-
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WHAT PERPLEXED BY THIS ADVICE HE EXPLAINED THAT THE PM HAD

A VERY FULL SCHEDULE DURING NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER WAS VACATION MONTH. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE PM REGARDED ME AS A FINE FELLOW AND IF I THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT TO SEE HIM, HE WAS CONFIDENT AN APPOINTMENT COULD BE ARRANGED, ALL OF WHICH COMPOUNDED THE MYSTERY OF THE REAL MOTIVE FOR THE NEGATIVE ADVICE.

3. ON THE FOLLOWING DAY THE PM GAVE HIS SPEECH AT HEIDELBERG CHALLENGING MR. MITCHELL'S STATEMENT. I DEDUCED FROM THAT OUTBURST THAT WHAT MULLER HAD BEEN TRYING TO TELL ME WAS THAT THE PM WAS IN AN ANGRY MOOD AND THE TIME WAS NOT PROPITIOUS FOR A MEETING.

4. THIS NOON DFA SECRETARY BRAND FOURIE PHONED ME AND IN ELLIPTICAL FASHION REFERRED TO MULLER'S PREVIOUS ADVICE AND NOTED THAT IF I STILL WANTED TO SEE THE PM, HE WAS SURE VORSTER WOULD RECEIVE ME. HE ALSO MADE VAGUE REFERENCES TO HOW THE PRESS WAS EXAGGERATING "RECENT STATEMENTS" AND THE UTILITY OF PERIODIC DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PM. IN SPEAKING OF AN APPOINTMENT, HE MADE CLEAR THAT I SHOULD PLACE MY REQUEST DIRECTLY WITH THE PM'S OFFICE, WHICH I TOOK TO MEAN THE INITIATION SHOULD COME FROM ME. I THANKED HIM FOR THE NEW ADVICE BUT GAVE NO INDICATION THAT I WOULD BE FOLLOWING IT UP IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

5. THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THIS ABOUT FACE. FOLLOWING MY MEETING WITH MULLER WE WORKED THROUGH BRAND FOURIE TO SEE WHETHER THE PM WOULD RECEIVE NEW YORK TIMES COLUMNIST SULZBURGER LATER THIS MONTH. FOURIE CAME BACK (PRETORIA 4184) WITH A FAVORABLE ANSWER. THE TWO FOREIGN AFFAIRS PRINCIPALS MAY HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY COMPARED NOTES AND, IN THE FACE OF THE GROSS INCONSISTENCY, WERE SIMPLY TRYING TO AVOID MY TAKING UMBRAGE. THE OTHER EXPLANATION IS THAT THE PM IS CONCERNED OVER THE SHARP REACTION IN THE US TO HIS HEIDELBERG SPEECH AND IS SEEKING, THROUGH A CONVERSATION WITH ME, TO HEAD OFF THE PROMISED MITCHELL RESPONSE OR TO SOFTEN ITS CONTENT. I AM INCLINED TO ACCEPT THE SECOND THESIS. THE EVIDENCE IS NOT CONCLUSIVE BUT THIS IS WHAT I READ INTO FOURIE'S COUPLING THE CHANGE IN ADVICE WITH THE REFERENCE TO THE PRESS EXAGGERATING "RECENT STATEMENTS."

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YM ASSUMING THE SECOND THESIS IS THE CORRECT ONE, I DO NOT INTEND TO RENEW MY REQUEST FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE PM IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES SINCE MY TAKING THE INITIATIVE COULD BE PLAYED PUBLICLY AS A US EFFORT TO SMOOTH THINGS OVER.

BOWDLER

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